**Guidelines - What does it look like to**

**provide uniform choice for girls?**

Uniform policies need to be developed and presented in such a way that they encourage *all* students to choose between *all* uniform options. By doing so, we ensure students and their parents are fully aware of what uniform options are available, and we increase the likelihood that students will wear clothing that they feel comfortable in.

**This guidance note allows you to examine your uniform policy, and changes you may be making, to consider whether you are hitting the mark with uniform equity for girls.**

Have you provided girls with girl-cut shorts and long pants? It is not appropriate to offer girls the boy-cut shorts and long pants as their only option. Schools would not offer girl-cut shorts and pants to boys.

Have you determined whether your female students are willing to wear the shorts and pants you have chosen? Are your unisex options genuinely unisex? To be considered genuinely unisex, the shorts or long pants must **not** have been available as the boys’ uniform option previously to being offered to girls.A uniform that has been worn for years by boys will be viewed as a boys’ uniform - this uniform is not gender neutral. Most girls will not choose to wear a uniform that was previously labelled a boys’ uniform.

Are you able to list all uniform options available as ‘Students Uniform’ rather than ‘Boys Uniform’ or ‘Girls Uniform’? This would mean that once appropriate girls’ shorts and long pants have been added to the uniform options, girls and boys can choose whichever options they prefer.

Have you included culottes and skorts for girls instead of shorts? Is there any reason to do this? For gender equity in school uniforms to be achieved, girls must be offered shorts and long pants, even if culottes and skorts are also on the uniform policy. Often, girls will not wear culottes as they can be so voluminous that they are still revealing when girls do cartwheels or play upside down on the monkey bars. Skorts are an unnecessary addition.

Have you offered girls both shorts and long pants as part of their everyday school uniform? School uniform policies should be climate neutral: allow students to choose every day whether they wish to be in the summer or winter uniform, based on whether they feel hot or cold, and not on what date is on the calendar.

Have you checked whether the girl options available are similar in price to boy options? When parents are required to pay significantly more for the female uniform, this creates inequity.

Have you ensured that shorts and long pants for girls are part of the informal and formal uniform? Do not ask girls to purchase skirts or dresses for photos, official occasions or excursions. As boys are not required to do this, this is another example of sex discrimination, and places an additional cost on the families of female students that the families of male students do not have.

Have you considered whether the materials used and colours chosen are modern and comfortable (e.g. lime green, heavy woollen, long pants are not practical)? Where possible, allow parents to buy similar generic versions of items at local stores to keep prices down.

 Have you ensured girls shorts and long pants include pockets, and are made from comfortable and long-lasting natural fibres where possible?

Have you ensured female students know that all options available, are available as everyday wear? Have you included the shorts and pants in photos in the school uniform policy, order forms, and on the school and supplier websites? Have you ensured the uniform in uniform shops also shows pants and shorts for girls in advertising and displays?

Have you made sure that all options are stocked by the uniform supplier and available in the uniform shop? Do you have a sufficient range of sizes in all options, or the ability to have items available from the uniform supplier quickly once ordered? Where shorts and long pants are offered to girls, but are not easily available for parents to purchase, real choice is being denied.

Have you carefully checked the language used in your school uniform policy documents? Statements such as *“shorts and long pants are available for girls if required”* or *“the preferred option for girls is a dress”* can lead to discrimination, creating barriers and potential for individuals that request a choice to be targeted by their peers.

Remember - school uniform policy must align with relevant anti-discrimination legislation: choice of uniform offered, use of language, and availability of options are important.

*In implementing the above recommendations, schools will create a culture and climate where girls feel comfortable to wear either long pants or shorts, or skirts or dresses. In turn, this will align the school with broader society, demonstrating that female students wearing shorts and long pants is acceptable.*

**A note on language:**

Some states have used the term ‘gender neutral’ in their policy documents to indicate that shorts and pants should be available for girls and boys to wear, and that indeed all uniform options on a school uniform’s policy should be made available to all students.

Some people confused “gender-neutral uniforms” with “gender-neutral children”. Some principals simply removed the words “boys” and “girls” from their uniform lists and claimed they now had “gender-neutral” uniforms.

The important perspective here is that of the students. If students recognise a uniform as a boys’ or a girls’ uniform, then it is unlikely that the opposite sex will wear the uniform. Having appropriate girls’ and boys’ options, in shorts and long pants for example, and then listing these on your policy as simply ‘student uniform options’, allows students to choose from all options and buy what works for their body shape and gender identity.

Many policy documents now clearly state that girls must be offered girls’ shorts and pants in all uniform categories (e.g. summer, winter, sports), and that all uniform options available on a school’s uniform policy must be able to be worn by all students. As it is often the case that girls want to wear girls’ clothing, and boys’ want to wear boys’ clothing, it is important that schools offer girls’ and boys’ shorts and pants (not culottes and skorts). Where truly unisex options are available, these should be provided to all students.